COVERUPS!

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DeMOHRENSCHILDT'S MYSTERIOUS DOCTOR

by Jim Marrs

Everyone close to George DeMohrenschildt feels his strange and hurried trip to Europe with Dutch journalist Willem Oltmans must have played some part in the events leading to his death in 1977.

Yet months before departure, George had an even more curious encounter with a Latin doctor in Dallas.

"This doctor had many lengthy sessions with George which involved intravenous injections," says his widow, Jeanne DeMohrenschildt.

"I have become convinced that this doctor, in some way, lies behind that nervous breakdown George suffered in his final months."

Prior to the Bicentennial year of 1976, life had become pleasantly quiet for the DeMohrenschildts in Dallas. Both were involved in physical fitness, playing tennis daily and taking long walks.

George's life centered around their apartment near Love Field and on his teaching position at Bishop College, a predominantly Black school in south Oak Cliff. Jeanne was busy manufacturing a line of tennis dresses under her then professional name, Jeanne LeGon.

This quietness was broken, however, when word reached them that a new investigation into the John F. Kennedy assassination was being planned. Congress, after some severe political infighting, had formed the House Select Committee on Assassinations.

"We were delighted and were hoping the truth would emerge this time," says Jeanne. "We had discussed the events in Dallas many times between ourselves and we both felt that Lee Oswald had been framed for a crime he did not commit."

Due to political pressures, the assassination investigation didn't get underway until late in the spring of 1976, and then it was under the direction of a new chief counsel.

It was in June of that year that George suffered a relapse of chronic bronchitis, an aftermath of his asthmatic childhood.

This, coupled with economic problems at Bishop (which was constantly underfinanced), caused George's blood pressure to rise.

"In June, someone—I have thought and thought about it, but I cannot remember who—recommended that George see this new doctor in Dallas. His name was Charles Mendoza," says Jeanne. "This doctor told George he could help his bronchial condition without hospitalization, which George detested. But Mendoza said George would have to visit him two or three times a week at his office. So George began his visits to the doctor, happy that he would not have to go to the hospital."

Jeanne was happy for him, until she began to notice that his health seemed to be getting worse, rather than better.

"His bronchitis seemed to improve, but his blood pressure continued to be very high and he became nervous and agitated," she says.

She adds that George continued to see Mendoza and soon she began going with him, often spending two to three hours in the waiting room while George underwent his "therapy."

When she asked what the therapy consisted of, George said he was being given shots, but he didn't know specifically what they were.

"Mendoza also insisted that we buy all of George's medicine from the pharmacy near his office. He explained that he was a part owner and the medicine would cost less that way," she says. "But I checked with my usual pharmacy and learned that the medicine prices were the same, if not lower, than the doctor's pharmacy.

"I confronted Mendoza with this information and demanded to know exactly what kind of medicine and treatments he was giving George. Mendoza became very angry and upset. But I learned nothing useful.

"From then on I accompanied George to the doctor, but I was not allowed to be with him during the 'treatments.' Mendoza said George was gravely ill and had to be alone during his therapy.

Although I was becoming suspicious of this doctor, George continued to see him, relieved at not being placed in the hospital."

Finally, later in the summer of 1976, Jeanne asked George to total up his bills from the doctor. They came to $575, and that was only for visits, not medication.

"That finally convinced George," says Jeanne. "He did not go back to Mendoza. But the treatments seemed to have brought about a change. George became more and more nervous. He began insisting that we hurry and finish a book we were writing about Lee Oswald, entitled 'I Am A Patsy' after his famous remark in the Dallas Police station.

"George had managed to take some time off from Bishop College, and during the day he would transcribe tapes and bits of information. At night we would discuss the contents and George would type them into manuscript form.

"One evening I went to bed early, leaving George with the manuscript. Late in the night he woke me up, saying he wanted to discuss it, but I complained that I was too tired and that it could wait until morning.

"I awoke about 5am and tried to wake George, but he wouldn't wake up. I got up and went to the bathroom to check his medication and was suddenly gripped with fear. His medicine containers littered the bathroom and they were all empty!

"I panicked. Rushing to the telephone, I called Mendoza and shouted 'George is unconscious. All the medicine bottles are empty, including a bottle of Valium you prescribed. He refilled that one yesterday.

"I was enraged when he refused to come see George. He calmly suggested that I call the hospital, which would be the quickest source of help. Angrily, I hung up and called an ambulance service."

Two paramedics arrived and began working on the unconscious George DeMohrenschildt. One of them asked Jeanne to find out what he had ingested. They were relieved to hear the names on the bottles.

They said he was very lucky," says Jeanne. "Although most of what he took was tranquilizers, he had also taken a veterinarian's prescription for digitalis meant for our dog Poppaea.

"They said the digitalis was a stimulant which had counteracted the tranquilizers and that there was no need of taking him to the hospital.

"Later that afternoon, George came to. All I could do was sit and stare at him. Why did you do such a stupid thing, I asked him."

According to Jeanne, George's voice was low and faint. He seemed very tired.

"I was trying to save you, my darling," he told Jeanne. "They are after us and if I am dead, maybe they will leave you alone."

"We talked for a long time and I kept asking 'Who George, who are they?'

George finally answered "It's the FBI and the Jewish Mafia. You don't know it, but they have been after us for a long time."

During the next several days, Jeanne tried to calm George. "But I couldn't seem to reach him," she says.

"George became even more anxious and more fearful. Pursued by enemies, whether real or imagined, he prowled our apartment, locking and relocking doors and checking the windows.

"His days were filled with ominous cars trying to follow him and faceless men trying to break into our apartment. He felt the telephone was bugged and our wine poisoned, and he kept repeating that the FBI and the Jewish Mafia were after us."

At Jeanne's request, George had stopped seeing Mendoza, but the fear and feelings of persecution begun during his "treatment" continued to grow.

In late July, Jeanne convinced George to visit her brother in California as a holiday, but the trip turned into an ordeal.

"He kept accusing 'them' of changing the road signs. He maintained that Tucson was actually El Paso and even tried to jump from the moving car. Nearing Los Angeles, the car broke down and George was convinced it had been sabotaged. But a mechanic later told me that George had driven the car hundreds of miles in low gear, ruining the transmission."

In September, George decided to return to Dallas to keep personal watch over his bank accounts. Jeanne remained with her brother, a defense industry official who was one of the men who helped develop the atomic bomb.

"The day after George returned to Dallas," says Jeanne, "our attorney, Pat Russell, called and said George had taken an overdose of pills and had been rushed to the hospital by neighbors. He recovered from this attempt but, in October, he was involved in a serious traffic accident and believed that the car was destroyed, even after I had it repaired. By then I knew something had to be done to help George.

"So early in November I visited a judge, but he said nothing could be done without a mental examination."

"On November 11, two sheriff's deputies arrived to take George to Parkland Hospital. He must have still harbored guilt feelings about his work for the Germans during World War II because he told me 'It's the Jews. They have caught up with me!' But I told him no, I had sent for the deputies.

"It was terrible. He must have believed that everyone in the world had turned against him, even I."

The Parkland doctors diagnosed paranoia after listening to George's claims of harrassment. They advised electroshock treatment.

"I delayed this treatment for more than three weeks," says Jeanne, "but after they told me that if I didn't authorize the treatments, George would be sent to a state hospital where the treatments would be harsher, I finally yielded.

"After the shock treatments, George was at least calm enough to realize that he was better off keeping his mouth shut."

George went home for Christmas and then was released from Parkland in the early days of 1977.

"He seemed to be somewhat better," says Jeanne. "At least he didn't talk about his fears as much.

"Later in January, George returned to his teaching position at Bishop College and I felt the situation was calm enough to allow me to return and finish my visit with by brother, Sergei. I certainly needed the rest.

"No one knows what happened to George after I left, but apparently his fears returned, if indeed they had ever left. All I know is that he tried to call me, but instead got Sergei's 17-year-old son.

"Is Jeanne there?" he asked.

"No, she left," was the reply.

"Where did she go?" George asked.

"I don't know," replied the son. George hung up.

"I had gone shopping with my sister-in-law and her son knew it. But he had though George was just asking about my immediate whereabouts. In fact, it was the next day that the son remembered to tell me of George's call. I tried to reach George in Dallas, but he was already gone.

"In his anxious condition he must have believed that I had deserted him. The next thing I knew he turned up in Europe with that vicious Dutchman, [Willem] Oltmans. He must have thought he had nowhere else to turn.

"But it all began with Dr. Mendoza."

A check with the Dallas County Medical Society showed that a Dr. Charles Mendoza had registered with the association just two months before he began treating George DeMohrenschildt. Mendoza left Dallas in December 1976, shortly after George had entered Parkland for mental problems. Mendoza's forwarding address proved fictitious.

With the information now available about CIA mind-control experimentation and behavior-modification, and the known connections between George and that agency (a CIA memo from former Director Richard Helms made public in 1978 showed he filed numerous reports as an informant for the spy agency), it is more than a little suspicious that his mental problems didn't begin until his "treatment" at the hands of this shadowy doctor.

George was found dead of a gunshot wound to the head in his daughter's Florida home March 28, 1977, just a few hours after Gaeton Fonzi, an investigator for the House Select Committee on Assassinations, had called, only to find that George was off at an interview with author Edward J. Epstein.

Although his death was officially ruled a suicide, Jeanne and others disbelieve this verdict and controversy continues to surround both George DeMohrenschildt's life and death.

LBJ wanted book written on Kennedy assassination, memo says

Jack ANDERSON

One of history's strangest attempts at literary collaboration is described in an internal FBI memo that tells how President Lyndon Johnson tried to get FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover to write a book on the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

The time was October 1966, three years after the assassination in Dallas. Every conspiracy theorist in the country seemed to have a scenario contradicting the Warren Commission's conclusion that the accused assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald, had acted alone.

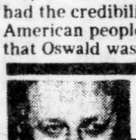
Johnson was dismayed at the public's fascination with the Kennedy assassination and the persisting conspiracy theories. He had tried to close the door on the conspiracy idea by appointing a bipartisan commission of prominent, credible public figures to investigate the assassination.

Yet I later learned from sources close to Johnson that he had his own suspicions about a conspiracy.

From his earliest intelligence briefings on the assassination, he privately suspected that Cuban President Fidel Castro may have ordered it. He feared that if the American people learned of this, they would demand military reprisal against Cuba, and this could lead to a dangerous confrontation with the Soviet Union.

To prevent this, Johnson appointed the Warren Commission. I don't know whether he tried to influence its deliberations, but he was clearly distressed that the commission's verdict was still under attack three years later.

Johnson wanted to do something to re-establish the commission's credibility and lay to rest the conspiracy talk. He decided that Hoover, then still a formidable figure, had the credibility to persuade the American people, once and for all, that Oswald was the lone assassin.



So LBJ, using his best behind-the-scenes technique, got his close friend, Supreme Court Justice Abe Fortas, to approach Hoover. Fortas was skeptical but made the overture through Hoover's trusted assistant, Cartha D. DeLoach.

DeLoach conferred with Hoover, who rejected the book idea as Fortas had expected. According to an internal memo that DeLoach wrote on Oct. 10, 1966, he broke the news to Fortas and explained "the many reasons why the director could not accede to the president's and Justice Fortas' request."

Fortas then confided, states the memo, that "he had argued with the president that it was not logical for the director to prepare this book inasmuch as the director in doing so would necessarily have to substantiate the investigative efforts of many other agencies."

But Johnson had a fallback position, which Fortas then presented. He asked that Hoover at least issue a statement on one point the critics had raised: the discrepancies between FBI reports and the Warren Commission concerning the Kenne-

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dy autopsy.

DeLoach told Fortas he "felt certain" Hoover would agree to this modest proposal and immediately set to work drafting such a statement. The files contain a handwritten note from Hoover about the statement, saying simply: "Let me see it. H."

DeLoach, now retired, told my associate Les Whitten that the matter was resolved by issuing the Hoover-approved statement in response to an inquiry from *The Washington Star*. As DeLoach remembered it, the statement reiterated the FBI's view that Oswald acted alone.

(Just a few months later the CIA issued it's instructions on how to counter the Warren Commission critics; the document, declassified in 1975, was sent to CIA offices all over the world)

Fort Worth Press, Wednesday, January 15, 1964

Plans for 'Defense' of Oswald Are Described

The New York man who reportedly will defend Lee Harvey Oswald in death plans to contend Oswald could not have practiced with his rifle.

And he plans to write a book about it.

Mrs. Ruth Paine, the Irving housewife who befriended Oswald, accused of the assassination of President Kennedy, and his wife Marina, told THE PRESS she stated to Mark Lane that Oswald could not have taken the rifle from her garage and gone to practice without her knowledge.

And THE PRESS learned from a reliable source that Mr. Lane called Oswald's mother, Mrs. Marguerite Oswald, from New York about five weeks ago asking for information to write a book.

Sources said Mr. Lane's book would center on the "legal loopholes" of Oswald's arrest and "execution" by Jack Ruby.

Mrs. Oswald told him she "would be willing to agree on an offer."

It was not known today whether Mr. Lane made a money offer for the information which Mrs. Oswald would give him for his book.

According to Mrs. Paine, Mr. Lane has filed a report to the Warren Commission investigating the late President Kennedy's murder.

The "defense" motion planned by Mr. Lane is believed to be hinged largely on Mrs. Paine's statement that Oswald could not have practiced with the 6.5 mm Italian rifle which has been tagged as the weapon that killed former President Kennedy.

"He couldn't drive," Mrs. Paine said. "And he couldn't have walked that far. If he had he would have been noticed carrying a rifle."

Mrs. Paine's argument that Oswald could not drive has been challenged.

Howard Malcom Price, of 1127 Rice in Grand Prairie, vows he saw Oswald three times at the range in Grand Prairie where he works. Mr. Price told THE PRESS that on one of the occasions he saw Oswald driving a car when he left.

"One time he came out by himself," Mr. Price said. "He was driving an old Chevrolet or Ford. It was dark blue or black."

Mr. Price said he was certain the man was Oswald. He said Oswald had another man with him on one or two of the trips to the range.

Mrs. Paine is adamant in her statement that Oswald could not drive. She told THE PRESS she could be sure of this because she herself attempted to teach him to drive.

"As a friend of Marina's," she said, "I thought he ought to learn how to drive. A couple of Sunday afternoons we went to a parking lot and practiced parking and turning. He couldn't even make a right angle turn. He'd pull around too far.

"I wouldn't have loaned him my car. He learned well, but he just never had had a chance to learn."

(Without regular, almost daily, practice a rifleman of any grade will be a poor shot. Both Paine and Price stood b their stories. These old, seldom studied clips are unique and will b used regularly)

JFK DOCTOR SAID SHOT CAME FROM FRONT

by Gary Mack

John F. Kennedy's personal physician, Dr. George Burkley, believed the head shot was fired from in front of the president. He said so in a briefing of Assistant White House Press Secretary Malcolm Kilduff just moments before the official death announcement.

The proof is in a recently discovered film in the files of NBC News. Part of it will be seen in "Call To Glory," a two-hour tv movie to be shown on ABC this June 30.

President Kennedy was pronounced dead around 1pm. In the next 25 minutes, Burkley and others briefed Kilduff so he could adequately answer the news media.

The meeting began at 1:30 in a small makeshift press room at Parkland Hospital. There were no live cameras and apparently no radio microphones. White House photographer Tom Atkins captured part of the proceedings on 16mm color movie film, but his camera was a silent model.

But one other news cameraman was there and he was shooting 16mm black and white sound film. He was Bob Welch, then and now with NBC affiliate KXAS-TV (then known as WBAP-TV). Bob's film, as with all NBC and local footage, was processed at the main studio in nearby Fort Worth. Copies were made of most of it, but this reel got overlooked and was never shown.

Somehow, the reel got mistakenly included in the NBC material and was brought to New York where it was reportedly shown one time at the beginning of a first year anniversary special.

Then in the fall of 1980, while doing film research on the unreleased documentary "The President Must Die," I rediscovered this important evidence at NBC. It was one of several reels with assorted scenes of Parkland. I strongly urged that it be included in the documentary, but I'm told it was not used.

Several months ago a film researcher for "Call To Glory" contacted me about any obscure or seldom-seen footage concerning the death of JFK. I told him about the Welch reel at NBC and eventually it was located.

Since the entire sequence will probably not get aired, here's the complete transcript with added emphasis. News media (NM) personnel were not identified, but ABC's Bob Clark and Tom Wicker of the New York Times are known to have been present:

MK: President John F. Kennedy died at approximately 1 o'clock Central Standard Time, today, here in Dallas. He died of a gunshot wound in the brain. I have no other details regarding the assassination of the president.
NM: Mac, anything about the shooting, the shooter, the sniper?
MK: No, I have no information on that.
NM: Was Mrs. Kennedy hit?
MK: Mrs. Kennedy was *not* hit.
NM: Was Connally hit?
MK: Uh, Governor Connally *was* hit.
NM: Was Vice President Johnson hit?
MK: The vice president was *not* hit.
NM: Where was Connally hit?
NM: Has the vice president taken an oath?
MK: Uh, no.
NM: Can we see him?
MK: Uh, he has left.
NM: Where did he go?
MK: I'm sorry, for reasons of security I cannot discuss the whereabouts or travel plans of the vice president.
NM: Mr. Connally's condition?
MK: Uh, I understand that Governor Connally's condition, uh, is satisfactory. He was shot twice, once apparently in the side and once in the wrist.
NM: Which one, which wrist? [Sounds like Bob Clark]
MK: I'm sorry, Bob, I don't know.
NM: How many times was the president shot?
MK: The president was shot once
NM: Where is Mrs. Kennedy?
MK: in the head. Uh, Mrs. Kennedy will be returning to, uh, Washington.
NM: Mac, when did the president die?
NM: Was he dead on arrival here?
NM: Immediately?
MK: No he was not.
NM: Did he regain consciousness?
MK: No he did not.
NM: He did not *lose* consciousness, did you say?
MK: No, he did not *regain* consciousness.
NM: Mac, where's Mrs. Kennedy going?
MK: Mrs. Kennedy will return to Washington.
NM: [unintelligible]
MK: Yes.
NM: Who is with her now?
MK: Uh, just friends, who are on the trip, I don't
NM: Anything on the swearing in?
MK: get into the individuals. No, I beg your pardon?
NM: When will the new president be sworn in?
MK: As soon as possible. Where and when that will be, I cannot tell you.
NM: Will we be notified so we can be present?
MK: You will be notif, notified. It may not, uh, it may not be in a place where you can be present. However, the, the, the details I'll make available to you.
NM: This is the old [?], Mac?
NM: Uh, where shall we repair to, where should we go?
MK: Uh, I would suggest that you stay right here. Any further information, uh, I will either come up and give you myself, or I'll have Mr. Hawkes come up and give you.
NM: Mac, can we have a doctor's statement? [sounds like Tom Wicker]
MK: Uh, Dr. Burkley told me that it's, it's a simple matter, Tom, of, uh, of a bullet, right through the head.

On the word "right," Kilduff pointed directly to his right temple. A still from the Atkins film showing this precise moment can be seen in David Lifton's book Best Evidence.

Kilduff's job demanded a careful and precise choice of words, so arguments that his gesture may have been just a general motion are unconvincing. And it was not a simple matter.

STILL ON THE CASE

BY RON ROSENBAUM

Conspiracy buffs live in a world of uncertainty, haunted by goats' heads, a pristine bullet, and bouncing skulls. But the most haunting uncertainty of all is this: who was Lee Harvey Oswald?

DEALEY PLAZA. IT'S A HOT MORNING IN AUGUST of this year, and motorists whizzing down Elm Street are witnessing a curious, if not sinister, phenomenon. Three people have gathered around a manhole at the foot of the famous grassy knoll. There's an attractive young blond woman, a spry, grizzled older fellow in a Coors cap, and a guy in his thirties with a tape recorder. The older guy is bending down and—demonstrating remarkable vigor—pulling the hundred-pound manhole cover out of its recess in the sidewalk.

Then he stops. Waits for a Dallas Police Department squad car to cruise by and disappear into the darkness of the Triple Underpass. At last he has yanked the massive iron seal clear of the opening that leads down to the storm sewer system honeycombing the underside of Dealey Plaza.

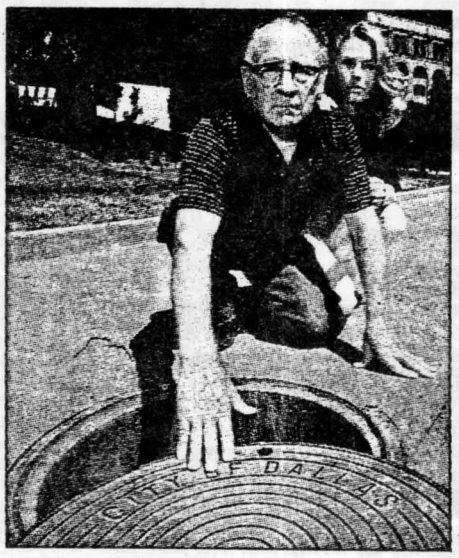
Then he does something really strange. He walks out into the middle of Elm Street traffic, heads uphill between two lanes of oncoming cars, and plants himself in the middle of the road about 25 yards upstream.

"Okay now, Ron. I'm standing right where the president was when he took the head shot. Now I want you to get down in that manhole," he yells at the younger guy, who, not to be coy, is me. "Elaine," he calls out to the woman, "you show him how to position himself."

So here I am, out in the midday sun, lowering myself into this manhole. It's kind of cool down here, though some might call it dank. While it is nice to escape the pounding of the direct sunlight, this is not my idea of summer fun.

But this is no ordinary manhole. This is the historic Dealey Plaza manhole that a certain faction of assassination buffs—led by Penn Jones, Jr., the guy in the middle of Elm Street—believes sheltered a sniper who fired the fatal frontal head shot on November 22, 1963. This manhole is the first stop on a grand tour of Dallas assassination shrines, during which, among other things, Penn has promised to show me the exact locations from which, he says offhandedly, the nine gunmen fired at John F. Kennedy that day. Sort of the Stations of the Cross Fire in conspiracy-theory gospel.

You remember Penn Jones, Jr., don't you? The feisty, combative country editor of the *Midlothian Mirror*. Author of the four-volume (so far) privately printed series called *Forgive My Grief*, the continuing account of his JFK-assassination investigation, which focuses on the deaths and disappearances of the 188 witnesses (so far) who Penn contends knew too much about the assassination conspiracy to be permitted to live.



Penn Jones and Elaine Kavanaugh

Well, Penn Jones, Jr., is still on the case. He has retired from his editor's post to a farmhouse in Waxahachie, where he lives with his disciple and research associate, Elaine Kavanaugh, and publishes a monthly assassination newsletter, the *Continuing Inquiry*.

"Elaine," Penn yells out, "get Ron to back up against the wall there. Then he'll know what I mean."

I think Penn has sensed that I have some reservations about his Manhole Sniper theory, and this elaborate positioning is designed to address my doubts. In fact, I am skeptical.

Not the least of my problems with the Manhole Sniper theory is that it requires the putative manhole assassin to have popped up the hundred-pound manhole cover at just the right moment, fired a shot, then plopped it down over his head without any of the surrounding crowd taking notice of his activity. But Penn is determined to set me straight on this misapprehension.

"Okay now, Ron, you've got to move back so's your back is touching the rear of the hole there," Elaine says.

I follow her instructions and find myself completely under the overhang of pavement. In total darkness, except . . . well, damned if there isn't a perfect little rectangle of daylight coming through an opening in the pavement right in front of my eyes, and damned if Penn Jones' face isn't framed right in it.

"That's the storm drain in the curb side you're lookin' out now," says Elaine.

"See what a clear shot he had?" Penn Jones yells out. "Okay, Elaine, now pull that manhole cover back over on top of him. Ron, you'll see that even in the dark you'll be able to feel your way to one of those runoff tunnels he used to squirm his way under the plaza to the getaway."

Elaine begins to lug the heavy seal over the hole. Over me.

"Well, actually, Elaine, I don't think that'll be necessary. I get the picture," I say, hastily scrambling out, visions of the glowing eyes of sewer rats sending shivers through me.

Penn Jones hustles over, dodging traffic, and drags the cover back into place. He gives me a look that says, "Uh huh—another one not prepared to follow the trail all the way," and then he sets off on a trot up the grassy knoll to what he says is the next point of fire.

But before we follow Penn Jones up the grassy knoll, before we get any deeper into the labyrinthine state of the art of JFK-assassination theory, let's linger a moment on the manhole demo, because we've got a metaphor here for my own stance in relation to the whole web of conspiracy theory that the assassination buffs have spun out over the past twenty years. Because I'm going to be your guide in this excursion, and I want you to trust my judgment and powers of discrimination. I want you to know my attitude toward these people, which can be summed up by saying that I'll go down into the manhole with them but I won't pull the cover over my head.

You need a connoisseur when you're dealing with the tangled thicket of theory and conjecture that has overgrown the few established facts in the years since the events of that November 22. You need someone who can distinguish between the real investigators still in the field and the poets, like Penn Jones, whose luxuriant and flourishing imaginations have produced a dark, phantasmagoric body of work that bears more resemblance to a Latin American novel (Penn is the Gabriel García Márquez of Dealey Plaza, if you will) than to the prosaic police-reporter mentality I prefer in these matters.

You need someone with something akin to what Keats called negative capability—the ability to abide uncertainties, mysteries, and doubts without succumbing to the temptation of premature certainty. You need someone like me. I rather fancy myself El Exigente of conspiracy-theory culture, like the "Demanding One" in the TV coffee commercial. I've covered the buff beat since the early seventies—you might call me a buff buff—since the time, before Watergate, when everybody laughed at the idea of conspiracies.

So with El Exigente here as your guide, let's look at who's still on the case after twenty years and whether they have anything worth saying. What are the real mysteries left, and is there any hope we'll ever solve them?

REMEMBER THE WAY THE RESIdents of the little coffee-growing village in the Savarin commercial gather, buzzing nervously around the town square, awaiting the arrival of El Exigente, the white-suited coffee taster whose judgment on their beans will determine the success or failure of their entire harvest?

Well, the buff grapevine had been buzzing furiously for days before my departure for Dallas. Cross-country calls speculating about the nature of my mission. My past writings on the subject extricated from files, summoned up on computer screens, and scrutinized suspiciously. Indeed, angrily in some cases, as I learned the morning of my departure, when I received an irate call from newly ascendant buff David Lifton, author of the most successful of the recent buff books, *Best Evidence*. He accused me of plotting to trash his cherished trajectory-reversal theory.

As I set out for Dallas on the eve of the twentieth anniversary of the Dealey Plaza shooting, I was aware that I was heading into a buzz saw of buff factionalism. Long-festering rivalries and doctrinal disputes were dividing the Dallas-area buffs after years of beleaguered unity. Some of the bitterness can be attributed to the aftermath of the British invasion of Dallas buff turf in the past decade. First there was British writer Michael Eddowes with his KGB-impostor theory: the Oswald who returned from the Soviet Union in 1962 wasn't the same Lee Harvey Oswald who defected to the USSR in 1959 but instead was a clever KGB impostor who used the name "Alek Hidell" (one of Oswald's aliases in Dallas and New Orleans). A few years later British writer Anthony Summers came to Dallas to research his theory that Oswald was not a Russian but an American intelligence operative. Both writers swept through town, wined and dined the local buffs, wrung them dry of their files and facts, and departed to publish completely contradictory conspiracy theories.

Eddowes' book, *The Oswald File*, left the most lasting legacy of divisiveness; it launched the epic embarrassment of the Oswald exhumation controversy. Eddowes maintained that his KGB-impostor theory could be proved by examining the body buried in Fort Worth's Rose Hill Cemetery under Oswald's name. Dental and medical evidence would show that the body belonged to an impostor, he said.

A number of Dallas buffs invested a lot of credibility in the exhumation crusade. Mary Ferrell, for instance. The great archivist. For years she had labored diligently to collect and index everything ever written about the assassination, every document, every clipping, every scrap of potential evidence. Her husband built a room in their back yard to hold the ever-expanding files. They bought two German shepherds to protect their stock. And for all those years, unlike the publicity-happy buffs who used her work, she had never sought to publish a theory of her own, had never abandoned her archivist's neutrality, had just gone on compiling her ultra-authoritative, supercomplete name index to the JFK assassination. Sample entries from the name index indicate its comprehensiveness:

> Boyer, Al—Hairstylist. He accompanied Josephine Ann Bunce, Jamye Bartlett and Bonnie Cavin to Dallas from Kansas City, Missouri. Warren Commission, vol. 22, p. 903.
>
> Boykin, Earl L. Wife, Ruby O. 1300 Keats Drive. Mechanic at Earl Hayes Chevrolet. Probably the same as Earl Boykin, who gave his address as 1300 Kouts at the Sports Drome Rifle Range one of the days Oswald was allegedly there. *Texas Attorney General's Report.*

But then this dashing Englishman swept into town and away went her meticulous scholarly neutrality. "This Eddowes was some character," one rival buff remarked. "He had his own Rolls-Royce flown over from England. He'd chauffeur Mary around. Then she'd fly over to England, and he'd drive her around London in Rolls-Royces."

It was the old story. Mary Ferrell ended up enlisting in the exhumation cause, drawing a flotilla of Dallas buffs behind her. They were all convinced that the authorities would never let the body be exhumed because of the terrible dual-identity secret it would reveal.

Then in 1981 Oswald's wife, Marina, was somehow enticed into the exhumation battle, and it was Marina's lawsuit that finally opened the tomb. And so out they went to Rose Hill Cemetery with cape and shovel to see just who was buried there.

The body they dug up seemed to have Oswald's teeth—the American Marine Oswald's teeth—down to the tiniest detail. The medical examiner said that the

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Ron Rosenbaum has recently written about counterintelligence theory for Harper's *and Watergate theories for the* New Republic.

Oswald buried in Oswald's grave was the same Oswald who had been in the Marines before he defected to Russia. The second-body buffs weren't satisfied, of course (they're still demanding a ruling), but the credibility of the whole Dallas buff community went right down the tubes.

ARRIVE IN DALLAS WITH A SUITcase full of current buff literature, most of it newsletters. I've got the *Grassy Knoll Gazette*, put out by Robert Cutler. I've got Penn Jones' *Continuing Inquiry*. I've got Paul Hoch's *Echoes of Conspiracy*. And I've got *Coverups!* from Gary Mack of Fort Worth.

The last is new to me. But buried in a buff gossip column, there's a tip-off that it, too, is a product of Dallas-buff fratricide: "Gary Mack and Jack White were dismissed by Penn Jones as consultants to *The Continuing Inquiry*. No explanation was given."

I've heard a lot about Gary Mack. He is the industrious young turk of the new generation of high-tech audiovisual-aids buffs who have supplanted the old-style document-indexing types. Over the years, they've blown up, enhanced, and assiduously analyzed every square millimeter of film and tape taken that day, and they've discerned lurking in the grainy shadows shapes and forms they say are gunmen. Leafing through Mack's newsletters, I come upon a fascinating photomontage of Grassy Knoll Gunmen on the front page of *Coverups!* There is Black Dog Man—I've seen him before—and a new one to me: Badge Man. I am familiar with various suspicious characters of their genre, such as the Babushka Lady and the Umbrella Man, to whom the photographic buffs have attributed various mysterious roles. I decide to call Gary Mack and check these guys out.

Black Dog Man. At first he was a furry shadow on top of the concrete wall behind the grassy knoll. Certain audiovisual-aids types saw in blowups of that furry shadow a manlike shape. In some blowups, they said, they could see a man firing a gun. Skeptical photo analysts on the staff of the House Select Committee on Assassinations thought that the furry shadow looked more canine than conspiratorial and dubbed the dark apparition Black Dog Man.

And there he is on the front page of the October issue of Gary Mack's newsletter. Next to Black Dog Man is Badge Man; an extreme blowup of a tiny square of what seems to be a tree shadow is accompanied by a visual aid, "a sketch of what he might look like if this photo is computer-enhanced." And suddenly—in the sketch at least—Badge Man leaps out of the shadows and takes explicit human form. He's a man in the uniform of a Dallas police officer, complete with badge and shoulder patch. He appears to be firing a rifle concealed by what looks like a flare from a muzzle blast. In the foreground of the Polaroid from which this blowup was made, the Kennedy limousine is passing the grassy knoll and the president is beginning to collapse. It is less than a second after the fatal head shot. Am I watching Badge Man fire it? The House Select Committee photo panel reported, "Although it is extremely unlikely that further enhancement of any kind would be successful, this particular photo should be re-examined in light of the findings of the acoustics analysis," which placed a gunman behind the grassy knoll.

What does your guide, El Exigente, make of Black Dog Man and Badge Man? Much as I would like to have an enhanced portrait of the assassin at the moment he fired the fatal shot, I'm afraid my instinct is that these photos must be classified as an artifact of the Beatles-in-the-trees variety. Recall that when Bob Dylan's *John Wesley Harding* album came out—the first one after Dylan's near-fatal motorcycle accident—there were stories of cryptic messages embedded in the album-cover photograph? There was supposed to be a group shot of the Beatles—their four heads anyway—hidden in the shadows of the trees. I saw the Beatles in the trees once they were pointed out to me. But I don't think they were there, if you know what I mean. The same can be said for the thereness of Black Dog Man.

When I reach Gary Mack, he says he has something exciting to show me if I visit his Fort Worth home and investigatory headquarters: a beautiful blown-up enhancement of the Bronson film.

The Bronson film. The last, best hope that we'll get a motion picture of the "other assassins." Sort of the Shroud of Turin of the buff faith. Dallas onlooker Charles Bronson was taking home movies in Dealey Plaza that day. He caught the assassination in color. Showed it to the FBI. Nothing of interest, they said. Fifteen years later an assassination researcher named Robert Ranftel came across an FBI report, buried in 100,000 pages of declassified documents, about this film. Dogged Dallas assassination reporter Earl Golz tracked down Bronson—now in Ada, Oklahoma—checked out the film, and discovered something no one noticed before. Up there in the left-hand corner of the frame, the Bronson camera had caught the sixth-floor windows of the Texas School Book Depository. Not just the sniper's-nest window on the corner where Oswald was said to be perched but also the two adjacent windows. It's those two windows that Gary Mack wants me to see.

He also fills me in on his continuing struggle to rescue the Dallas police tape from being reconsigned to the dustbin of history. Gary thinks he can save it. I'm not so sure. For a glorious period of about three years, the Dallas police tape represented a triumphant official vindication of everything—well, almost everything—assassination buffs had been saying since 1964. The tape (actually a Dictabelt made of transmissions from a motorcycle cop's open mike to police headquarters on November 22) was excavated from a box in a retired police intelligence officer's closet in 1978, after Mary Ferrell reminded the House Select Committee of its possible existence and probative value.

Acoustical analysis of the sound patterns submerged in the static on the police tape led the House Select Committee to the spectacular conclusion that "scientific acoustical evidence establishes a high probability that two gunmen fired at President Kennedy" and that the assassination was "probably a result of a conspiracy."

Not only that. The highly respected acoustics scientists who analyzed the tape concluded from their reconstruction of echo patterns and test firings in Dealey Plaza that the second gunman was actually on the grassy knoll. Yes, the much ridiculed assassination-buff obsession, the grassy knoll. The longest, most thorough official government investigation of the JFK assassination concluded that the buffs were right all along.

The vindication was short-lived, though. In 1982 a new panel of acoustics experts, this one convened at the request of the Justice Department by the National Academy of Sciences and known as the Ramsey Panel, blasted the police-tape findings out of the water. Its determination was that the so-called shots heard on the Dictabelt, including the grassy-knoll shot, took place a full minute after the shootings in Dealey Plaza that day and thus couldn't be shots at all.

And so we're back to square one. The acoustical evidence doesn't rule out a grassy-knoll gunman or a conspiracy or even the nine gunmen Penn Jones posits. But the mantle of scientific proof the buffs had downed now seems to be in shreds.

Not so, says Gary Mack. "Are you familiar with automatic gain control, Ron?" he asks me, and he launches into a highly complex, technical critique of the Ramsey Panel critique of the House Select Committee acoustics report. The Ramsey Panel misinterpreted automatic gain control in their retiming thesis, he says. They neglected to analyze the sixty-cycle power hum to see if the Dictabelt in question had been rerecorded. They neglected certain anomalies of the Dictabelt that could be cleared up by further analysis of echo-pattern matching and corroborated by a more precise jiggle analysis of another gruesome home movie, the one taken by Dallas dressmaker Abraham Zapruder.

Gary sounds like he knows what he's talking about, and perhaps he can make his case. But listening to his technobuff talk, I get a distinct sinking feeling that the Dallas police tape—like almost every other piece of "definitive" evidence in the case—is now forever lost in that limbo of ambiguity, that endless swamp of dispute that swallows up any certainty in the Kennedy case.

This morass of technobuff ambiguity leaves me utterly exhausted and depressed, but Gary Mack shifts the conversation to a missing-witness story. It isn't the greatest missing-witness story I've heard. Nothing like the classic Earlene-Roberts-rooming-house story. Nothing like the second-Oswald-car-salesman story. But it has enough of that *misterioso* provocativeness to give me a little thrill of that old-time buff fever and remind me why the whole hopeless confusing case has continued to fascinate me for two decades.

This particular missing-witness story concerns Oswald's whereabouts at the time of the shooting. No witness has ever placed him on the sixth floor any later than 11:55 a.m., 35 minutes before the gunfire. Oswald maintained that he was on the first floor throughout the shooting. And one witness, Bonnie Ray Williams, who was eating fried chicken on the sixth floor, stated that as late as 12:20 p.m. he was alone up there, that there was no Oswald on the sixth floor. Where was Oswald? The Warren Commission implied that he must have been hiding on the sixth floor in his sniper's nest from 11:55 on, while the Fried Chicken Man was chomping away.

But Gary Mack tells me about a witness, never questioned by the Warren Commission, who contradicts that hypothesis. She is Carolyn Arnold, now a resident of Stephenville. Back in 1963 she was executive secretary to the vice president of the Book Depository. She knew Oswald well by sight. She says that she came upon Oswald sitting alone, eating a sandwich in the employees' second-floor lunchroom at 12:15, just ten minutes before the motorcade was scheduled to pass the building. Her timing of this sighting has been corroborated convincingly by other employees, who noticed when she left her office to go to the lunchroom.

If Oswald was planning to assassinate the president from the sixth floor, what was he doing calmly eating lunch four floors below, right before the president was supposed to come into view? Could he have been that hungry, that calm? And if that was Oswald in the lunchroom, who were the figures spotted moving around on the sixth floor by witnesses across the street from the building at just about that time?

Whatever the significance of the Carolyn Arnold story—and perhaps it can be explained by eyewitness error—just listening to Gary Mack tell it brings me back to that peculiar sense of dislocation that attracted me to the JFK case in the first place. That frisson of strangeness.

BRING UP THE *TWILIGHT ZONE* theme. It's summer 1964. I'm seventeen, and I'm in a small crowded theater in New York's Gramercy Park section. A fierce man strides across the stage with a pointer, gesturing contemptuously at a huge blown-up slide projection of Lee Harvey Oswald. It's the famous *Life* magazine cover photo, the one with Oswald posing in his back yard with a rifle in one hand, a copy of the Socialist Workers Party paper, the *Militant*, in the other, and a pistol on his hip. He's got that weird, glazed, grim-faced grin.

But there's something else going on in this picture, the man with the pointer is saying. Something going on with the shadows. Look at the direction of the shadow of the gun, he commands us. Now look at the direction of the shadow cast by Oswald's nose. Different angle. Something's wrong. This picture has been faked. It's part of the frame-up. That's Lee Harvey Oswald's head but someone else's body. The man with the pointer is, of course, Mark Lane. He has just come from Washington, where he has been representing Oswald's side of the story before the Warren Commission at the request of Oswald's mother, Marguerite. And investigating the case himself. Already he has turned up some stories the authorities don't want us to hear, he says. Stories that suggest deep currents of complicity between the Dallas police and the conspiracy to frame Oswald.

The Earlene Roberts story, for instance. Roberts was the landlady of Oswald's shabby Oak Cliff rooming house. She recounted an incident that occurred a half hour after the shooting. Oswald had returned home and disappeared into his bedroom, and she was sitting in her parlor watching coverage of the assassination on TV when a Dallas police squad car pulled up in front of her place. The car paused, then honked its horn twice and left. Shortly thereafter, Oswald emerged and headed off in haste, only to be intercepted—accidentally, according to the Warren Commission—by Officer J. D. Tippit, who was shot dead while attempting to apprehend him.

The police department denied that any of its vehicles passed or stopped at Oswald's address. The only car in the vicinity at the time, they said, was driven by none other than Officer Tippit. Just what was going on between Oswald and Tippit?

Whoa. *Twilight Zone* again. Most Americans remember exactly where they were and what they felt when they first heard that John Kennedy had been shot. I'm no different; I do, too. But I have to confess that I remember even more vividly where I was and what I felt when I first heard the Earlene Roberts story. I remember feeling a chill, feeling goose bumps crawling up from between my shoulder blades. There was a kind of thrill too, the thrill of being let in on some secret reality. Shadowy connections, suggestions of an evil still at large that ordinary people were not prepared to deal with. Dangerous knowledge.

That Earlene Roberts story certainly struck a nerve. And not just with me. Brian De Palma's second film, *Greetings*, while ostensibly about the draft, featured a character obsessed by Kennedy's assassination and by the Earlene Roberts story in particular. This guy was convinced, as is Penn Jones, that Earlene Roberts' death, before she was able to give testimony to the Warren Commission, was the work of the People Behind It All.

Dangerous knowledge. It's the recurrent theme in almost all the assassination-conspiracy films that followed De Palma's

first. In Alan Pakula's *The Parallax View*, in William Richert's *Winter Kills*, in Michelangelo Antonioni's *Blow-Up*, in De Palma's later *Blow Out*, the hero begins by investigating the death of a Witness Who Knows Too Much, and soon he becomes a Witness Who Knows Too Much himself. His attainment of a darker, more truthful vision of the way things really are makes him a target for assassination. A way, perhaps, for us to approach the horror of being assassinated, the unassimilable horror of what JFK experienced at Dealey Plaza.

Let me return to 1964, because in the fall of that year, just two months after hearing the Earlene Roberts story, I was fortunate enough to get to know the assassination researcher whose methods and judgment I still respect above all others in the field. His name is Josiah Thompson, and he was my freshman philosophy instructor at Yale. At the time I knew him, he was becoming increasingly preoccupied with two mysteries: the often misinterpreted nature of the mind of the gloomy Danish antirationalist philosopher Sören Kierkegaard and the numinous hints of an alternate interpretation of the truth lurking in the shadows of the Warren Commission's 26 volumes.

His investigation of Kierkegaard resulted eventually in a highly acclaimed biography and a study of Kierkegaard's pseudonymous writings called *The Lonely Labyrinth*. His investigation of the teeming labyrinth of the Kennedy case took him into the *Warren Report*, then out into the world and down to Dallas, where he reinterviewed the witnesses, reexamined the evidence, and found new witnesses and new evidence. He produced what many regard as the most scrupulously researched and carefully thought-out critique of the official conclusions, a book called *Six Seconds in Dallas: A Micro-Study of the Kennedy Assassination*.

And so with Thompson as my model, I came to think of critics of the *Warren Report*—the best of them, anyway—as intellectual heroes, defying conventional wisdom and complacency to pursue the truth. I had lost track of Thompson during the past ten years, and I was having trouble tracking him down to see what he thought of the JFK case after twenty years. It wasn't until I got to Dallas that I heard a strange story about him from one of the West Coast buffs who had found me in my hotel room through the buff grapevine. He'd heard that Thompson had abandoned his tenured professorship of philosophy and chucked his whole academic career to become a private eye somewhere on the West Coast. What the hell could that mean? Had he become a casualty of dangerous knowledge? Or had he fallen in love with it?

NEXT MORNING. RENDEZVOUS WITH Penn and Elaine at the Book Depository for the grand gunmen tour. The Texas Historical Commission plaque at the base of the building still astonishes with its frank rejection of Warren Commission certainty. This is the building from which "Lee Harvey Oswald allegedly shot and killed" JFK.

"You ever been in the military, Ron?" Penn Jones is asking me. We've moved to the top of the grassy knoll, and Penn is pointing out sniper's nests in the buildings surrounding the killing ground down below.

There was hardly a building or tree that hadn't bristled with guns that day, according to Penn's vision of things. There were gunmen on top of the Dal-Tex Building, gunmen in the Records Building, even gunmen up in the skies.

"Look over there," Penn says, pointing toward the top of the Post Office Annex. "That was an observation post. They had a man there overlooking things so he could assess the damage done" by the first nine gunmen in Dealey Plaza. If they failed, Penn says, he could alert the multiple teams of backup gunmen farther along the parade route. Or if necessary call in the airborne team.

"They," for Penn, is the military. He believes that the military killed Kennedy. Not the Mafia, not the CIA, not Cuban exiles, not some of the fusions of all three currently fashionable among buff theorists.

"Why the military?" I ask Penn. "Because they thought he'd withdraw from Viet Nam? Or—"

"Shit, no. So they could take *over*," he says.

Penn was in the military, a World War II transport officer in the North African campaigns. In some ways Penn is still in the military. Only, he's a general now. A master strategist. As he surveys the landscape of Dealey Plaza, pointing out the teams of gunmen, as we retrace the motorcade route through the streets of Dallas, examining the locations of backup gunmen teams, Penn is like a general reviewing his troops, a battlefield strategist pointing out the logic of his deployments.

And they *are* his, in the sense that—to my mind, anyway—they owe their existence more to the conceptions of his own mind, his strategic intelligence, the logic of what the military would do if Penn Jones were commanding it, than to any mundane criteria of reality.

Of course, Penn's army of gunmen doesn't spring entirely from his overactive imagination. We're standing on the railroad tracks now, the ones that cross over the Triple Underpass. Penn points out the famous railroad signal-tower perch of the late Lee Bowers. Up there on November 22, 1963, Lee Bowers had a clear view of the area behind the stockade fence that crests the grassy knoll. Right about here, where Penn, Elaine, and I are standing, police officer Joe Smith stopped a man who was exiting the scene with suspect haste, as Smith testified before the Warren Commission. The man showed Secret Service credentials to Smith. The Secret Service says that none of its agents could have been there at that time.

As for the late Lee Bowers, it was his "mysterious death," shortly after his Warren Commission testimony, that set Penn off on his twenty-year chronicling of deaths and disappearances of witnesses with dangerous knowledge.

"Lee Bowers was killed in a *one-car accident* in my hometown of Midlothian, Texas," Penn tells me, his drawl just crawling with embittered sarcasm. "The doctor in Midlothian who examined him told me that when he admitted him, Bowers was in some sort of strange shock."

Some sort of strange shock. The tour of Dallas with Penn and Elaine puts *me* in shock. Some sort of strange trance. Ordinary features of the landscape are beginning to assume sinister aspects. The whole city seems to be teeming with teams of gunmen, backup gunmen, the ghosts of murdered witnesses.

Even things that are not there somehow testify, in Penn's vision, to the work of a conspiratorial intelligence. We've been cruising along Stemmons Freeway on the route the motorcade would have taken to JFK's speaking engagement at the Dallas Trade Mart. Past the site of what was once the old Cobb Stadium before it was torn down. There were reserve gunmen on top of the stadium, Penn tells me.

And we cruise by the site of the old Highlander Hotel in Highland Park. Now replaced by some big new condo tower. "The paymaster stayed here," Penn tells me. "It's also where the gunmen stayed the night before. They tore it down completely. I think it's significant that all these buildings were torn down."

Penn is fascinated by the first-class treatment the gunmen got before the day of the shooting.

"They treat the gunmen real well, *before*," he tells me. "They're mighty important. Every wish of theirs must be complied with."

Almost wistfully he describes the wish-fulfilled life of the gunmen in the secret, safe houses he says they occupied the nights before the Night Before.

"There was one up in Lake Lugert, Oklahoma," he says. "That was some damn place. They had anything they wanted. Gambling, women. Lobsters flown in *daily*. *Shee*it."

Of course, Penn says, things changed for the gunmen the Day After.

"They loaded them in the two getaway planes and then just blew up the planes—one of 'em over the Gulf of Mexico, the other one down there in Sonora Province, old Mexico."

Not every shrine has been torn down. Some have been quietly disintegrating. The Oak Cliff sites. The Earlene Roberts rooming house to which O. returned shortly after the shooting. The house, where he and Marina had lived as their marriage disintegrated that year. Jack Ruby's raunchy apartment and motel pads. The Texas Theater, where O. was finally cornered.

"They just let this area decay," Penn says—as if even the inexorable organic breakdown of wood fiber is due to a conscious decision *they* made.

I'll never forget pulling into the driveway of this Oswald-and-Marina abode. It isn't so much the shock of discovering around back the hauntingly familiar outside staircase that served as a background for the controversial O.-with-rifle-and-nose-shadow pix.

No, it is the expression on the face of the ancient Mexican man who apparently lives in the decaying shrine now. Evidently Penn is a regular, fairly well tolerated visitor here; when we arrive, the man—who is sitting on the sagging, splintered front porch with a child who appears to be his grandson—waves familiarly at Penn. But as we pass, I notice a deeply puzzled expression come over his face. Why do these crazy Anglos keep cruising my driveway? What kind of satisfaction is it they're after, that they never get?

But the thing I'll remember most about our tour this day is not the haunted landmarks or the ghostly gunmen they conceal. The thing I'll never forget, for its intensity and authenticity—an intensity that explains the shadowy world they've created—is the grief of Penn and Elaine.

Actually, it's Elaine's grief. I already know about Penn Jones' grief. It is all there in *Forgive My Grief*, his saga of murdered witnesses to the truth. The title is from Tennyson, by the way, from a passage of *In Memoriam* addressed to God, who took away the poet's closest friend:

> Forgive my grief for one removed,
> Thy creature, whom I found so fair.
> I trust he lives in thee, and there
> I find him worthier to be loved.

Elaine's involvement in this whole thing is hard to figure out, though. Why would a bright, young, attractive woman—young enough to have hardly known who JFK was when he was shot—why would she immerse herself in the buff biz after two decades, when it doesn't look like the case is on the verge of being cracked and all Penn offers is the despair and futility of mourning one lost witness after another?

I begin to get a clue to what might be motivating Elaine during the course of the tour, on our way back from the Oswald-and-Marina house, when Elaine spots a fat woman on the street.

"That looks like my stepmother," she says. "God she was unfair to me. Every time I see a fat woman, I think of her and how unfair she was."

"Look at that concrete bridge abutment up ahead," Penn is saying. "That's where William Whaley [the taxi driver who took Oswald from downtown to Oak Cliff] died in a crash just after he tried to testify about Ruby and Tippit."

"My mother died when she was twenty-five," Elaine says. "Most of the rest of my close relatives are dead now. All I have left is my grandmother."

And so it continues as the tour winds down, a counterpoint of Penn's public grief and Elaine's personal grief.

Later, after the tour is over and we are cooling off with some beers, Elaine tries to explain why she has made Penn's project her life's work.

"From the moment I met Penn, I knew that's what I was gonna do—work on the case with him," she tells me. "And when I started, I was so excited."

"What happened?" I ask.

"Then I met all these people, and I saw there was no hope."

"Which people?"

"The other people on the case." She reels off a list of prominent buffs.

"What's wrong with them?" I ask.

"They none of them really *loved* John Kennedy. I remember meeting David Lifton and asking him point-blank, 'Did you love John Kennedy?' And he wouldn't give me a direct answer. And that's the real question: did you love the man? If you didn't love him, why work on the case? Then it's just a hobby or some kind of excitement."

Penn Jones interjects an anecdote about Lifton, who has attracted a certain amount of envy and resentment from other buffs for repackaging familiar criticisms of the JFK-autopsy mystery into his trajectory-reversal theory. It requires us to believe that the conspirators shot Kennedy from the front, then spirited his body away and altered the wounds so that the autopsy would establish that the fatal bullet came from behind. Lifton is one of the few commercially successful buffs. *Best Evidence* was on the *New York Times* best-seller list for four months and sold hundreds of thousands of copies in paperback.

Penn tells me, "I was at this party out in California some years ago, and it was a party for me, and David Lifton was trying to get in, but they wouldn't let him. So I went out and told him, 'David, I'd like to have you in, but the party's not being given by me. It's just *for* me.' "

Lifton denies that the incident ever happened. And now it seems the tables have turned anyway, with Lifton getting the attention and going on all the talk shows, and Penn's newsletter, according to Elaine, in decline.

"We're down to two hundred subscribers now," she says. "And most of them are old. Pretty soon they'll die, and in a few years we'll be down to fifty. And that's what we have to look forward to. In two more years it'll be all over. It's pretty sad."

But Elaine isn't going to give up.

"You get used to people laughing at you. You get used to the scorn and the ridicule. You put up with it because if you really believe in something, you don't stop, no matter what. It's like a religion."

She and Penn drift into a talk about religion, specifically about Thomas Merton, the Trappist monk and philosopher, Penn's idol.

"When Penn's gone, I'm gonna become a hermit like Merton," Elaine says. "Why should I bother with people anymore? I've lost everyone I loved except my grand-

mother and Penn. When they're gone, there won't be anyone."

Elaine's sadness has become so deep and so comprehensive that it's hard to believe it could get worse, but we haven't really touched bottom yet. She rallies briefly, then heads down again.

"But I guess you've got to keep up the fight," she says, rather unconvincingly. "Still it's pretty sad. It's heartbreaking, depressing. There are days when Penn and I both weep over it. We both grieve over it."

"Over it?" I ask. "You mean—"

"It's sad for the state of the country. But really it's more sad for John Kennedy. That's what we can't get over."

It is then that I realize that these people are not buffs. They are mourners. Their investigation of the assassination is a continuation of his last rites that they can't abandon. Unlike the rest of us, they haven't stopped grieving.

CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE

(Several readers have asked for a reprint of this very long article, but I must admit to some reluctance. Writer Ron Rosenbaum has long been a WC disbeliever, but he is less than pleased with some of the researchers. His observation of Penn and Elaine is excessively harsh and his avoidance of David Lifton inexcusable. Still, the article received a lot of behind the scenes attention: it was THE 20th anniversary piece for media and trendy types to read and earned Ron an appearance on ABC's news program Nightline. More than anything else, Ron portrayed the enthusiasm we all share that something can be done IF we work at it. As for the alleged party Penn spoke of, I believe David Lifton.)

■

DMN 5-15-85

TODAY IN HISTORY: On May 15, 1972, Democratic presidential **candidate George C. Wallace was shot and left paralyzed while campaigning at a Laurel, Md., shopping center. Arthur Bremer was convicted of the attempted assassination and sentenced to 63 years. The sentence was subsequently reduced.**

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PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

Great moments in the conspiracy time line.

NOVEMBER 22, 1963. Oswald tells Dallas reporters, "I'm just a patsy." Denies shooting JFK.

DECEMBER 1963. Mark Lane publishes "Lane's Defense Brief for Lee Harvey Oswald."

MARCH 1964. First suggestion of a "second Oswald" by Leo Sauvage in *Commentary*.

SPRING 1964. Enter the European critics with Joachim Joesten's *Oswald: Assassin or Fall-guy?* and Thomas Buchanan's *Who Killed Kennedy?* They blame U.S. government agencies, rich right-wingers, and racists.

SEPTEMBER 1964. *Warren Report* conclusions published.

NOVEMBER 1964. Warren Commission releases 26 volumes of testimony.

JUNE 1966. Edward J. Epstein publishes *Inquest*. Interviews with Warren Commission staff expose slipshod, limited nature of investigation and serious problems with single-bullet hypothesis. Goose farmer and former government investigator Harold Weisberg publishes *Whitewash*, one of the two most comprehensive polemics against *Warren Report*.

SUMMER 1966. Mark Lane's *Rush to Judgment* becomes national best-seller.

SEPTEMBER 1966. Sylvia Meagher publishes *Subject Index to the Warren Report and Hearings & Exhibits*; it becomes a key research tool.

NOVEMBER 1966. *Life* magazine commissions private investigation that casts doubt on Warren Commission conclusions.

FEBRUARY 1967. New Orleans DA Jim Garrison announces he has cracked JFK case. Takes David Ferrie—homosexual private investigator—into custody; Ferrie dies of a brain hemorrhage the day after his release. Assassination experts gather in New Orleans to contribute to Garrison's investigation.

SPRING 1967. Big split in assassination-buff world when critics Meagher and Epstein abandon and denounce Garrison.

NOVEMBER 1967. Meagher publishes *Accessories After the Fact*, acknowledged as most thorough critique of *Warren Report* based on contradictions of its own evidence. Josiah Thompson publishes *Six Seconds in Dallas*, scrupulous dissection of physical evidence that undermines case for Oswald as lone gunman, based on reinterviews of witnesses.

JANUARY 1969. Committee to Investigate Assassinations (CTIA) formed by attorney Bernard Fensterwald.

FEBRUARY 1969. Garrison's investigation, having disintegrated into misguided crusade against former CIA informant Clay Shaw, collapses. Jury deliberates fifty minutes and acquits Shaw.

1969–72. Years of despair; conspiracy theory falls into hands of cultists.

FALL 1972. First Watergate-assassination link uncovered by CTIA investigator Bob Smith: FBI report of 1963 allegation by Watergate burglar Frank Sturgis that he got into fistfight with "Oswald" in Miami. Oswald not known to have been in Miami.

JANUARY 1973. Jones Harris uncovers 1960 J. Edgar Hoover memo raising possibility that "an impostor is using Oswald's birth certificate." Norman Mailer founds the Fifth Estate organization to research intelligence-community role in Kennedy assassination.

NOVEMBER 1973. "Dylanologist" A. J. Weberman organizes tenth-anniversary demonstration at National Archives to protest disappearance of Kennedy's brain.

FALL 1974. CIA-mob assassination plots against Castro uncovered; JFK knowledge hinted.

JANUARY 1975. Rockefeller Commission undertakes first official review of JFK case. Concludes there was no CIA involvement.

FEBRUARY 1975. Former SDS organizer Carl Oglesby and Assassination Information Bureau convene summit conference in Boston and begin grass-roots campaign of lectures, demonstrations, and showings of uncut Zapruder film to mobilize support for JFK investigation.

SUMMER 1975. Senate Intelligence Committee (the Church Committee) establishes Schweiker-Hart subcommittee to investigate the investigation of JFK assassination.

JUNE 1976. Church Committee concludes that CIA cooperation with Warren Commission inadequate. Focuses on AMLASH case as possible Cuban connection in JFK killing.

SEPTEMBER 1976. U.S. House of Representatives forms Select Committee to investigate assassinations of JFK and King.

SEPTEMBER 1977. First official acceptance: House Select Committee chief counsel Robert Blakey flies ten assassination researchers to Washington to consult on avenues of investigation.

OCTOBER 1977. British author Michael Eddowes publishes *The Oswald File*, declaring JFK hit a KGB plot. Says "Oswald" who returned from Russia to shoot the president was a KGB agent who used the name Alek Hidell; long battle to get Oswald's body exhumed to prove thesis begun.

FEBRUARY 1978. Edward J. Epstein publishes *Legend;* suggests recruitment by KGB, intricate KGB plot involving false defector Yuri Nosenko to absolve Soviets of implication in plot.

DECEMBER 1978. House Select Committee gets report from acoustics experts on Dallas police tape: "95% certainty" of a second gunman behind fence of famous grassy knoll established.

DECEMBER 30, 1978. House Select Committee issues *Final Report:* JFK "was probably assassinated as a result of a conspiracy."

SPRING 1980. Anthony Summers, BBC reporter, publishes *Conspiracy*. Based on House Select Committee files and personal investigation, argues that "a renegade element in U.S. intelligence manipulated Oswald [and] activated pawns in the anti-Castro movement and the Mafia to murder the President and to execute Oswald."

JANUARY 1981. David Lifton in *Best Evidence* argues for secret surgery and trajectory reversal.

SPRING 1981. House Select Committee chief counsel Blakey publishes *The Plot to Kill the President*, which alleges Carlos Marcello–Santos Trafficante mob-hit plot behind November 22 shooting.

MAY 1982. Ramsey Panel of National Academy of Sciences rejects House Select Committee acoustics evidence.

MARCH 1983. *Rolling Stone* article: "Did Lee Harvey Oswald Drop Acid?"

FALL 1983. Jean Davison publishes *Oswald's Game*, which supports *Warren Report* conclusion that Oswald acted alone although motivated by anger at Kennedy plots against Castro. ◆

SPOTLIGHT 5-27-85

Hunt Appeals Pro-Spotlight Verdict

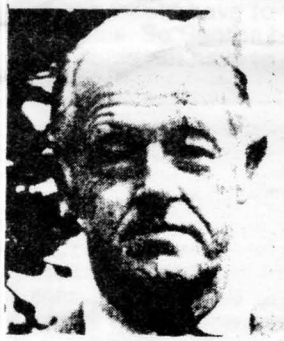
By William Carmichael

Watergate conspirator E. Howard Hunt has appealed the verdict of a Florida jury that he was not libeled by The SPOTLIGHT in a story by former CIA official Victor Marchetti, which appeared in this newspaper on August 14, 1978.

Judge J.W. Kehoe presided at the trial, which lasted from January 28 until February 6 and ended in the victory for The SPOTLIGHT and Liberty Lobby. Hunt had 30 days to appeal the verdict and his attorneys filed the appeal on the last possible day.

The appeal goes to the 11th Circuit Court, located in Atlanta. According to Fleming Lee, Liberty Lobby's general counsel, Hunt's attorneys will have to file a brief explaining why they think the appeals court should overturn the jury verdict.

When Hunt's attorneys file the brief with the appeals court, Lee explained, a copy will be made available to Liberty Lobby and The SPOTLIGHT. "The contents of our brief will depend on Hunt's arguments," Lee explained.



E. HOWARD HUNT
. . . Appeals jury verdict.

"We hoped we had laid this case to rest," Lee told The SPOTLIGHT. "We do not feel that there were any errors at the trial that would form the basis for an appeal. We expect to win in Atlanta, but the cost will be time lost and great expense."

According to Liberty Lobby's attorney, the crux of the original story by Marchetti was an internal CIA memo, to which the author referred. "The memo's existence was verified by testimony Liberty Lobby offered at trial," Lee said.

Marchetti's 1978 story, on which Hunt's charge of libel is based, mentioned the memo; it did not say Hunt was guilty.

"After two jury trials [Liberty Lobby and The SPOTLIGHT won the latter] and one appeal [which Liberty Lobby and The SPOTLIGHT made in 1983 and won in 1984] our position remains the same—that Hunt was not libeled," Lee said. ●

FWST 5-29-85

● A link between the Ewings of *Dallas* and the Kennedys of Massachusetts? So suggests psychologist Stuart Johnson writing in the current issue of the literary journal *Southwest Review*. He notes the Dallas locale of the show and of the John F. Kennedy assassination, likens Jock Ewing and family to Joseph Kennedy and family and writes, "We may be startled to realize that in both cases, two brothers named John (J.R.'s name is John Ross) and Bobby are shot within a few years of each other."

Wednesday, May 15, 1985, DALLAS TIMES HERALD

Historical perspective

Tourists want access to JFK assassin's perch

By ALAN VAN ZELFDEN
Staff Writer

Ambrozy Denes traveled 9,000 miles, halfway around the world, only to face the biggest disappointment of his dream trip to Dallas. He couldn't re-create the perch of assassin Lee Harvey Oswald the day President John F. Kennedy was shot 22 years ago.

Like thousands of other tourists who come to Dallas intent on gazing through the sixth-floor window of the Texas School Book Depository, from which the shots were fired, Denes discovered the historic view is off-limits. And like the others, Denes says he will return home less than satisfied.

"I come to Dallas just for this place; it was No. 1. And now I see that it is closed," Denes, a general practitioner from Yugoslavia, said as he stood in the building's foyer. "It is not enough. Kennedy was very popular in my country, and now, after 22 years, there is nothing to show for it."

Those sentiments are echoed daily in a registry the Dallas County Historical Commission maintains on the first floor of the seven-story building. And no matter how emphatically historical commission members promise that a sixth-floor assassination museum will be built when funds are available, the disappointment is evident.

"If you want to keep history going, you'd want to see where the assassin stood, the rifle he held in his hands. It's a real disappointment to have to stand here and look up at the window," said Florida resident Reggie Williams, 27, standing outside the building. "It's like robbing Americans of history."

The county bought the building for $400,000 in 1977 to deter those who, thinking the facility fostered a negative image of Dallas, sought to have it destroyed. County officials in 1981 renamed it the Dallas County Administration Building, designated it a historic site and moved some of its offices into the first two floors.

Beginning this year, the county plans to spend $1 million renovating the third and fourth floors and purchasing nearby land so the historical commission can build an outside elevator to serve the proposed museum.

Some officials say the county's enthusiasm over renovating the building has prompted the organization to redirect its fund-raising efforts. Since the efforts began last year, the organization has raised only $250,000, far short of the $3 million needed to refurbish the sixth floor into a museum.

Lindalyn Adams, chairwoman of the historical foundation responsible for raising funds, blamed the lack of money on a shortage of staff and an unwillingness among residents to revive a tragedy that shook the world. Some of those who lived through the assassination publicity are reluctant to commemorate the event with another monument, she said.

"It's as vivid as yesterday; it may be a little too soon for those who lived through it. But I think the museum is something of which Dallas will be very proud," Adams said.

Until now, the organization had relied on various Dallas foundations to generate funds. The effort fizzled shortly after it began.

Starting in June, members plan to ask the business community to help pay for the construction, which the organization originally had hoped to finish by late 1986.

More than 115,000 tourists visited Union Station last year, many of them asking about the school book depository and whether they were allowed to visit the sixth floor, said Letha Turner, who heads the information center. She predicted the museum could be the most-visited tourist attraction in Dallas after it is completed.

"There isn't a day goes by — whether it's raining, snowing or sleeting — that people aren't out there taking pictures," said Bruce McDougal, who maintains an office on the second floor and is assistant to County Judge Frank Crowley. "I've seen them in everything from business suits to shorts. They come by the busloads."

Like others, Gerald LaCroix, a 29-year-old Haitian who recently moved to Dallas, said he would dig into his own pocket to help fund the renovation if he thought it would hurry the project along.

"I had to come here and see what really happened," LaCroix said, standing in the plaza across from the depository. "I sure wish they would open it up. Twenty-two years is a long time to wait."

BRIEFS....The computer enhancement/analysis of the Moorman photo begins the week of June 17 because the scientists have been attending a European seminar - results should be public in late June on NBC Nightly News....Part of the "Badge Man" image has been spotted in a new frame blowup from the Orville Nix film - it's one the HSCA did not subject to computer enhancement.... Longtime investigative reporter and JFK researcher Earl Golz has left Dallas for Star Magazine in New York; his libel and defamation suits suits against Abilene National Bank and the Dallas Morning News have been dropped, possibly due to the likelihood of years of commuting to Texas courts. Court papers imply a cash settlement with the bank but not with the News; several bank execs still face trial on federal charges and one member of the prosecution has been US Attorney, and former Assistant District Attorney to Henry Wade, Bill Alexander....LA Times reporter David Crook did a major story on the ABC/CIA/Rewald mess and even got a rare interview with Director Casey; Crook did not mention Casey's part ownership of Cap Cities or the ABC takeover.... Federal Judge Sarah Hughes, who was appointed by JFK in 1961 and who swore in LBJ on Air Force One, died 4-23 at age 88....Please clip and forward any local reviews of Henry Hurt's book Reasonable Doubt, due later in July; it contains significant new evidence about the Tippit slaying and other events, and hometown reviewers often add worthwhile insight (I can return your original clippins)....Thanks to David Wright for the Hunt story.

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